

# State of Vermont

## House of Representatives



Montpelier, Vermont

### Joint House Resolution

J.R.H. 1

Joint resolution expressing support for the Public Service Board's establishment of a FairPoint Communications service investigation docket and urging the company to negotiate in good faith to settle the current employee strike

Offered by: Representatives Poirier of Barre City, Davis of Washington, Ancel of Calais, Bartholomew of Hartland, Beck of St. Johnsbury, Berry of Manchester, Burke of Brattleboro, Buxton of Tunbridge, Carr of Brandon, Chesnut-Tangerman of Middletown Springs, Christie of Hartford, Clarkson of Woodstock, Cole of Burlington, Connor of Fairfield, Conquest of Newbury, Dakin of Chester, Deen of Westminster, Donovan of Burlington, Ellis of Waterbury, Emmons of Springfield, Evans of Essex, Fields of Bennington, Frank of Underhill, French of Randolph, Gonzalez of Winooski, Haas of Rochester, Hooper of Montpelier, Juskiewicz of Cambridge, Kitzmiller of Montpelier, Klein of East Montpelier, Krowinski of Burlington, Lenos of Shelburne, Macaig of Williston, Manwaring of Wilmington, Martin of Wolcott, McCormack of Burlington, McCullough of Williston, McFaun of Barre Town, Miller of Shaftsbury, Morris of Bennington, Nuovo of Middlebury, O'Sullivan of Burlington, Patt of Worcester, Pearson of Burlington, Potter of Clarendon, Rachelson of Burlington, Russell of Rutland City, Ryerson of Randolph, Sharpe of Bristol, Stevens of Waterbury, Stuart of Brattleboro, Sullivan of Burlington, Sweaney of Windsor, Terenzini of Rutland Town, Till of Jericho, Townsend of South Burlington, Troiano of Stannard, Walz of Barre City, Woodward of Johnson, Yantachka of Charlotte, Young of Glover, and Zagar of Barnard

Whereas, since 2008, FairPoint Communications (FairPoint) has been Vermont's primary provider of landline telecommunications services, and

Whereas, although FairPoint promised to add hundreds of new jobs in the three northern New England states, the company's post-2009 bankruptcy workforce is now 20 percent smaller than in 2008, and

Whereas, in August 2014, FairPoint made what the company described as its last offer to its unionized employees for a new contract, and

Whereas, the proposal would have resulted in reduced benefits, but the unionized employees remained at work for two months and offered FairPoint \$200 million in concessions, and



Whereas, after their best efforts and much frustration, in October 2014 the employees' two unions, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2326 and Communications Workers of America Local 1400, authorized a strike against FairPoint, and

Whereas, since the strike started, consumer complaints have risen approximately 500 percent resulting in much personal and commercial inconvenience, and

Whereas, on November 28, 2014, the State's E-911 system missed 83 calls in part due to FairPoint's operational problems, and

Whereas, at the request of the Department of Public Service, the Public Service Board, on December 9, 2014, established Docket 8390 to investigate the service problems FairPoint has encountered, and

Whereas, Governor Peter Shumlin, the congressional delegation, and the leadership of the General Assembly's Working Vermonters Caucus have written letters to FairPoint's CEO Paul Sunu calling on FairPoint to return in good faith to the negotiating table, and the Caucus' letter indicated that failure to reach a fair and timely settlement would result in General Assembly members' examination of FairPoint's "financial strength and managerial competence to properly serve the people of Vermont," and

Whereas, on January 4, 2015, in Washington, D.C., the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service convened a meeting between the parties at which the Service assumed a more proactive role than in a prior session, now therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives:

That the General Assembly expresses support for the Public Service Board's establishment of a FairPoint Communications service investigation docket and urges the management of FairPoint Communications to settle the current employee strike in order to restore reliable telecommunications services in Vermont, and be it further

Resolved: That the Secretary of State be directed to send a copy of this resolution to FairPoint Communications CEO Paul Sunu, FairPoint Vermont President Beth Fastiggi, Governor Peter Shumlin, the Public Service Department, and the Public Service Board.